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General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

First Committee
17th meeting
Tuesday, 30 October 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Erdös ..... (Hungary)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 64 to 84 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the approved programme of work and timetable, this morning the First Committee will conclude the second stage of its work.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): My delegation is pleased to introduce a draft resolution under agenda item 75 (f), contained in document A/C.1/56/L.50 and entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific", on behalf of the following sponsors: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, and my own country, Nepal.

The first preambular paragraph recalls resolutions 42/39 D of 30 November 1987 and 44/117 F of 15 December 1989. By the fifth preambular paragraph the General Assembly would express its appreciation to the Regional Centre for organizing the annual disarmament meeting at Kathmandu, the regional disarmament meeting in New Zealand and the Conference on Disarmament Issues, held in Japan.

In its operative paragraphs the General Assembly would reaffirm its strong support for the further strengthening of the Regional Centre and underline the importance of the Kathmandu process as a powerful vehicle for the development of the practice of region-wide security and disarmament dialogue. Similarly, the General Assembly would reiterate its appeal to Member States, as well as international governmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations, to make voluntary contributions to the Centre.

In operative paragraph 6, the General Assembly, having taken into consideration the preparations made by the host country pertaining to the physical operation of the Centre from Kathmandu, would urge the Secretary-General to ensure the physical operation of the Centre from Kathmandu within six months of the date of signature of the host country agreement and to enable the Centre to function effectively.

My delegation and the other sponsors of the draft resolution sincerely hope that it will be adopted by consensus, as has been the practice in previous years.

Mr. Du Preez (South Africa): On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), I wish to introduce five draft resolutions and one draft

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decision under agenda items 66, 74, 75 and 84. Given their number, I would appreciate your indulgence, Sir, and that of fellow delegations, for the length of my statement.

Draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.18, entitled "United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament", underlines the importance of all regional centres as mechanisms to inform, educate and generate public understanding and support in the field of arms control and disarmament. The draft resolution supports the activities of the three regional centres in Nepal, Peru and Togo, and emphasizes their valuable contribution towards changing basic attitudes to peace and security. The draft resolution also requests Member States in each of these regions, as well as those in a position to do so, and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and foundations, to make voluntary contributions to the three regional centres so as to enable them to fulfil their role and to enhance their programmes of activities. It is the hope of the sponsors that the draft resolution will again be adopted without a vote.

The second draft resolution, document A/C.1/56/L.19, concerns the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). Members of the Non-Aligned Movement and a large majority of other members of the international community continue to believe that the convening of an SSOD-IV would offer an opportunity to review, from a perspective more in tune with the current international situation, the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament, and to mobilize the international community and public opinion in favour of the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and of the control and reduction of conventional weapons. The Non-Aligned Movement continues to believe that a special session should review the state of affairs in the entire field of disarmament and arms control in the post-cold-war era. The Movement remains concerned at the lack of progress in this regard, despite renewed attempts to establish another mechanism through which consensus on the objectives, agenda and timing of such a special session could be reached.

As was the case with the resolution adopted without a vote at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, this year's draft resolution calls for further steps that would lead to the convening of the fourth special session with the participation of all Member States, subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. The sponsors of the draft resolution continue to believe that agreement to convene a special session could be facilitated through continued consultations by the Secretary-General.

The only substantive change to the resolution adopted at the fifty-fifth session is the inclusion of a new preambular paragraph noting the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in which heads of State and Government resolved to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers. The sponsors wish the draft resolution to be again adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.20, entitled "Relationship between disarmament and development", underlines the importance of reallocating valuable resources released as a result of disarmament for development purposes, thereby reducing the gap between the developed and developing countries. This relationship has gained momentum and indeed become relevant against the backdrop of the diversion of a large proportion of financial, material and technological resources to armaments, which has placed a heavy burden on the economies of many States, especially developing countries. The stark contrast between expenditures for armaments and the paucity of aid for socio-economic progress is also self-evident.

The draft resolution acknowledges the actions taken in the context of the Final Document adopted by the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, and calls upon the high-level Steering Group on Disarmament and Development to strengthen and enhance its programme of activities, in accordance with the mandate adopted at that Conference. It also urges the international community to devote part of the resources made available through the implementation of disarmament and arms limitations agreements to socio-economic development. The draft resolution continues to request the Secretary-General to take action on the implementation of the action programme adopted at the International Conference. The sponsors trust that the draft resolution will again be adopted without a vote.

The draft resolution entitled "Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control", is contained in document A/C.1/56/L.21. Its fundamental objective is to ensure compliance with the relevant environmental norms when negotiating and implementing treaties and agreements related to disarmament. The international community has long been aware of the detrimental consequences of uncontrolled radioactive sources and the risk associated with military activities involving nuclear materials. The dismantling of certain categories of weapons requires techniques and methods that will sustain and augment the prevailing environmental standards. While the draft resolution does not make any reference to specific disarmament agreements, it nonetheless calls on States to take fully into account the relevant environmental norms when negotiating arms control and disarmament treaties and agreements. It also calls for the application of the advances made in science and technology to enhance security and facilitate disarmament without adverse impact on the environment or to its effective contribution to the attainment of sustainable development. We remain hopeful that the draft resolution will be adopted with the widest possible support.

The draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace", in document A/C.1/56/L.22, builds upon the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, circulated as document A/56/29. In this regard, it reiterates the importance of the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee in support of the development of a mutual, beneficial dialogue to advance peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region. To this end, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee is again requested to continue informal consultations and to report through the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. The NAM member States expect that this draft resolution will again be adopted with the support of a large majority of Member States.

Finally, the draft decision, document A/C.1/56/L.23, calls for the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the item "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security".

Mr. Westdal (Canada): I formally present draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.30, entitled "Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification". The following delegations have joined my own in sponsoring this draft resolution: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

This draft resolution is identical to resolution 54/46 of 1 December 1999, adopted without a vote by this Committee and by the General Assembly. The draft resolution, which Canada has introduced biennially for 16 years, provides an opportunity for us to reaffirm unanimously the centrality of verification in our disarmament and non-proliferation endeavours. Effective verification measures provide the essential assurance that States require that others will honour their obligations. By building confidence in arms limitation and disarmament agreements, verification contributes to a virtuous circle, buttressing the integrity of those agreements by encouraging transparency, respect for obligations and full implementation. Verification bolsters both bilateral and multilateral agreements, enhancing regional as well as global security. A variety of methods, from national technical means to international scientific monitoring, declarations, visits and investigations, all contribute to the verification of such agreements. Some of these methods can also be applied to agreements outside the non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament realm.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has recently demonstrated the worldwide acceptability and feasibility of a stringent verification regime involving both reporting and on-site verification by international inspectors. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) helps to verify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and the conclusion of additional protocols strengthens the NPT. Verification of the Treaty is also achieved through the review process and will be furthered by reporting by all States on the implementation of article VI, as agreed in

the Final Document of the May 2000 NPT Review Conference. Regrettably, efforts to achieve a compliance regime for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention have not yet borne fruit.

The 16 verification principles drawn up by the Disarmament Commission in 1988 and further elaborated by the United Nations study on verification in all its aspects, document A/50/377 of 22 September 1995, remain as valid today as when they were written, and perhaps more relevant than ever as we are reminded daily of the threat of weapons of mass destruction. I recommend those principles to all present.

Mr. Sood (India): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament", as contained in document A/C.1/56/L.13. The draft resolution is sponsored by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Fiji, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kenya, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Viet Nam, Zambia and my own country.

The draft resolution addresses an issue of fundamental importance to the international community, and particularly the developing world. Advances in the field of science and technology offer immense possibilities for development. However, there is a need to recognize that several of these advances are of dual use and could have both civilian and military applications. Access to scientific and technological advances for developmental purposes is a priority for developing countries for achieving economic growth and to participate actively in global trade.

At the same time, several countries in the developing world have had to pay a cost in terms of development because of the persistence of discriminatory control regimes. These regimes are in effect exclusive groupings of countries that limit the exchange of such technologies to exchanges between themselves, while denying access to others. The regimes are often non-economic barriers to normal trade, and go against the generally accepted principles of global economic relations. Exclusive export control policies were initiated to address proliferation concerns at a time when there were no global agreements that comprehensively addressed this issue. Questions have arisen as to whether such exclusive arrangements, with limited membership, and ostensibly for a temporary period, have been truly effective in achieving their stated purpose of strengthening the international non-proliferation regime, especially as regards scientific and technological applications connected with advanced weapons and weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the first multilateral disarmament agreement of a universal character, eliminating a complete class of weapons of mass destruction, offered an opportunity to put in place a multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory legal mechanism that would simultaneously address proliferation concerns emanating from unregulated transfers and promote the economic development of States parties. The CWC placed an obligation on States parties to review their existing national regulations in the field of trade in chemicals in order to render them consistent with the object and purpose of that Convention. However, the persistence of certain ad hoc control regimes, creating a dual category of States parties to the CWC, stresses the need for early implementation of all the provisions of the Convention.

The recent setback to negotiations for an effective protocol to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) of 1972 has unfortunately deprived the States parties of an opportunity to put in place an effective system of regulation of transfers of agents, toxins, equipment and technologies relevant to the Convention, while avoiding measures that hamper the economic development of States parties.

The lack of a genuinely non-discriminatory universal agreement regarding nuclear weapons has also reduced the effectiveness of non-proliferation efforts in the nuclear field. Nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects cannot be divorced from the need for measures that promote nuclear disarmament and the progressive elimination of nuclear weapons. Absence of a disarmament benchmark renders nuclear non-proliferation difficult not only to implement, but also to measure.

India has consistently maintained that proliferation concerns regarding materials and technologies related to advanced weapons systems,

weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory agreements which are transparent and open to universal participation. The reflection of this principle in multilateral disarmament agreements would not only improve their effectiveness, but also create an added impetus for their universality.

With a view to carrying forward the consideration by the international community of the issues at hand, India, along with the co-sponsors, commends the draft resolution to the Committee for adoption. We hope that it will receive the support of a large number of delegations.

Mr. Myint (Myanmar): I have the honour and privilege to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.44/Rev.1, entitled "Nuclear disarmament", on behalf of the following sponsors: Algeria, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Panama, the Philippines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Swaziland, Thailand, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own delegation.

We have put forward what has become our traditional draft resolution since 1995. Although it is not a formal Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) draft, it was born out of the Declaration of the Non-Aligned summit held in Cartagena in 1995. In fact, many NAM members are sponsors of this draft resolution. Since 1999, all Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries have been sponsors.

In its operative paragraphs, the draft resolution inter alia recognizes that there is a genuine need to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination; reiterates its call upon the nuclear-weapon States to undertake the step-by-step reduction of the nuclear threat and to carry out effective nuclear disarmament measures with a view to the total elimination of these weapons; underlines the importance of applying the principle of irreversibility to the process of nuclear disarmament, nuclear and other related arms control and reduction measures; welcomes the positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the reaffirmation by the States parties that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and calls for the full and effective implementation of the steps set out in the Final Document; calls for the conclusion of an international legal instrument or instruments on adequate security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States; expresses its regret that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament at its 2001 session, as called for in General Assembly resolution 55/33 T; reiterates its call upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee to deal with nuclear disarmament early in 2002 and to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons; and calls for the convening of an international conference on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects at an early date to identify and deal with concrete measures of nuclear disarmament.

Those are some of the elements in our draft resolution. Its main thrust is the proposal for a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the achievement of the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. I should like to ask, through you, Sir, that members of the Committee support the draft resolution, as they did our draft resolution last year.

Mr. Heinsberg (Germany): I have the honour to introduce under agenda item 74 (h), on behalf of the sponsors, draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.39, entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". I have pleasure in announcing that in addition to the sponsors listed in the document the following countries are also sponsoring the draft resolution: Albania, Chile, Eritrea, Guinea, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Mozambique, Niger, Panama, Uruguay and Zambia. My delegation thanks all countries that have sponsored this year's draft resolution and extends a warm welcome to the countries that have signed up for co-sponsorship for the first time this year. The ever-growing number of sponsors bears testimony to the fact that the subject of

the draft resolution — practical disarmament measures — enjoys global support comprising all regional groups in this house.

Practical disarmament measures remain an important item on the United Nations agenda. The easy availability of large numbers of cheap and ready to use weapons, illicitly traded or manufactured, is widely seen as adding to the intensity and duration of ongoing armed conflicts, as well as to the many risks of future incidents of violence. Existing arms control measures do not cover the case of light weapons being used as primary assault tools of combat in ongoing conflicts or current incidents of violence. Thus the concept of practical disarmament measures, as developed in the Agenda for Peace and also addressed in the Millennium Declaration, tries to fill a gap in the disarmament agenda.

The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July this year, must be seen as a further cornerstone in the attempt to contribute to the cause of disarmament in much the same areas as practical disarmament measures are applied. It should also be mentioned that the concept of practical disarmament measures has been included in the mandate of peacekeeping missions, most recently in the case of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). United Nations expertise in the field of practical disarmament measures has furthermore been rendered on an unofficial basis to the disarmament project in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Let me briefly comment on the few changes and additions made to the text of the draft resolution. While it follows in large part the wording of previous years, the additions to the second and third preambular paragraphs and the reference in the seventh preambular paragraph link the draft resolution to the Programme of Action of the United Nations small arms Conference. Furthermore, reference is made in the second and fourth preambular paragraphs to peacekeeping and peace-building, in view of the fact that practical disarmament measures make up an important element of United Nations activities in this field. Finally, the new operative paragraph 5 requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session a report on implementation, taking into consideration the activities of the Group of Interested States in this regard.

I take this opportunity to briefly call to the attention of representatives the activities of the Group of Interested States, which was established in March 1998, with more than 60 countries attending the first meeting. The Group has met 16 times so far and has become a forum and focal point for delegations to initiate and discuss selected projects in the field of disarmament, aptly supported by the services of the United Nations Secretariat. All projects have one thing in common: they must be practical and their scope must be well defined, and a solid cost-benefit relationship is a prerequisite. Projects so far have comprised fact-finding missions, workshops and arms collection projects, all of which aim at contributing to the goal of practical disarmament. It should be noted that the activities of the Group of Interested States are based on this resolution. The Group is open to all Member States wishing to contribute to the cause of practical disarmament, be it through advice, financial contributions or by requesting assistance in the field of practical disarmament.

Similar draft resolutions in the past have always been adopted by consensus. I trust that the draft this year will again be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation at this stage wishes to comment on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.51/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them".

The phenomenon of the proliferation of small arms and the excessive, destabilizing traffic in them has led to a great deal of discussion in recent years in debates on peace and security both in the United Nations and in regional and subregional organizations. Many parts of the world have already adopted specific measures to combat this phenomenon, reduce it and finally eliminate it. The adoption of moratoriums on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons by the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the States of East Africa, as well as the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position, show the will to put an end to the evil of illicit trafficking in small arms.

The Security Council has also adopted a number of resolutions to combat illegal trafficking in small

arms, including resolutions 1196 (1998) and 1209 (1998), adopted when my country was a member of the Security Council.

Today it is more a matter of effective action, a genuine, pragmatic commitment on the ground, rather than simple declarations of intent or rhetorical statements. Last July's United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects adopted a Programme of Action, section III of which lists specific measures to help States to put an end to this illicit trade. They include reinforcing capacities in fields such as the development of legislation and the tracing and marking of small arms, as well as their destruction. Paragraph 3 of that section also covers possible financial and technical assistance to States to help them to combat this illicit trade. My delegation hopes to see all these measures translated into action.

United Nations bodies and civil society organizations, which give a great deal of support to the fight against this illicit trade, also deserve financial support. We have in mind particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), whose resources should be increased to enhance its support for programmes of collection and destruction of small arms.

Yesterday afternoon there was a reference in the Committee, quite rightly, to the difficulties encountered by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. The Centre, which was set up to support and promote the efforts of African countries in the field of security and disarmament, unfortunately has very limited resources, given that its tasks and needs are enormous. Therefore, the Centre, which is extremely important for the continent, should be granted the necessary financial, human and material resources to help it finance its programmes for the collection and destruction of small arms.

In conclusion, I stress that assistance to States to prevent the illicit traffic in small arms should concern all regions, since no part of the world, especially the developing world, is spared this phenomenon. My delegation will support any draft resolution along those lines.

Mr. Antonov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is once again introducing a draft resolution entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security", this year contained in document A/C.1/56/L.3.

The rapid development of information and telecommunication technologies has acquired today the character of a global technological revolution in the field of information, embracing all spheres of society, without any exception — politics, economics, public administration, finance, science, culture and, finally, international relations. Information resources are increasingly becoming one of the most valuable elements of both the national and global heritage.

At the same time, lately there has been an objective increase in the potential threat of the use of information technology achievements for purposes that are inconsistent with the goals of progress in science and technology, as well as with the objectives of maintaining international peace and stability and ensuring the observation of the principles of non-use of force or the threat of force, non-interference in internal affairs, and respect for human rights and freedoms.

It is important to reflect on how to prevent the use of technologies intended for peaceful applications and dual-purpose technologies, including information and computer technologies, in order to wage information wars and conduct illegal activities, especially terrorist acts fraught with the most devastating consequences. The very recent tragic events in the United States have highlighted the need for the international community to search for ways and means to solve this problem and elaborate relevant preventive measures.

With Russia's direct involvement, the issue of international information security has for a number of years been in the focus of United Nations attention. The consensus adoption by the General Assembly of resolutions 53/70, 54/49 and 55/28 implies not only recognition by the countries of the world of the existence of this problem, but also a call for its further consideration in a multilateral format. That is the underlying reason for the initiative taken by the Russian Federation this year.

The draft resolution we are introducing this year is in line with previous resolutions on the subject; it is consistent with their non-confrontational nature and takes into account the views of many States. We see the possibility for further developing the idea of international information security on the basis of a consistent approach, expansion of the agenda and

geography of its discussion and an increasingly concrete nature of further resolutions serving the common interests of security and stability.

I wish to stress once again that Russia's draft resolution on international information security is not intended to impose any particular vision of this problem. Nor do we have any plans to control information and telecommunications systems, restrict the free flow of information or inhibit access to it. On the contrary, the draft resolution implies respect for all existing democratic standards applicable to this sphere. However, we have been mindful of concerns expressed by some of our colleagues when discussing the draft, and we have incorporated their suggestions in order to make more specific some of its provisions.

Drawing on the experience of a step-by-step solution of other major international security problems, the draft resolution this year requests the Secretary-General to conduct a study of threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them. We suggest that this be done with the assistance of governmental experts appointed by the Secretary-General on the basis of equitable geographic distribution and with the help of Member States in a position to render such assistance. In our view, that would contribute to a more substantive discussion at the expert level of the whole range of issues related to international information security. It would also lead to better understanding of the conceptual approaches and positions of the parties and, possibly, narrow their differences.

At the same time, the consultations on the draft resolution have revealed that a number of delegations believe that international information security, as a rather new and insufficiently explored concept, might require a kind of preliminary testing. Mindful of this and the budgetary implications, we propose at this stage to take a policy decision to set up a group of governmental experts to examine the issues related to international information security, postponing its practical implementation until 2004.

I encourage all delegations to support Russia's draft resolution, which I hope will, as with similar resolutions in previous years, be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): The speakers' list indicates that I am supposed to speak on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.42, but that is not the case. I take the floor to speak on a draft resolution that we considered but did not present at this session. I should like to address some of the ideas contained therein that we have been developing on the subject of national legislation and regulations on the transfer of arms and other sensitive materials. We feel that effective control of these transfers is of great importance from the perspective of arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation, stability and security, and with a view to combating terrorism. Against this background, we have been working on the draft of a resolution dealing with this issue.

In the course of our consultations it became clear that we should take account of a number of related areas where consensus had been reached with great effort, a consensus that we certainly did not wish to undermine. We therefore felt that it would be better to avoid any misunderstanding in this fragile and sensitive debate. We decided not to press our point at this session, taking into account also the overall political context of our present meeting and the desire of everyone here to avoid unnecessary confrontation.

Notwithstanding these sensitivities, we were encouraged by many to pursue our original idea. We remain convinced that effective national legislation on the transfer of arms and other sensitive materials is of the utmost importance for the international community in general and for disarmament, non-proliferation and counter-terrorism in particular.

We also believe that countries that have effective legislation to this effect should inform others that are still in the process of developing such legislation. The Netherlands has contributed projects in this field and will continue to do so.

We think that the issue of arms transfers should also be addressed at the global level, and that nations should exchange information on this subject through the United Nations system, so that every country has immediate access and can draw important lessons from what other countries have developed in terms of national legislation and regulation. We will avoid any inappropriate linkage to areas where these ideas may seem to meet with sensitive considerations. At the same time, during our consultations we have detected a positive interest in devoting attention to this issue at the United Nations level.

Against this background, we will, in close consultation with a number of interested countries, continue our work on a resolution that will have a good

chance of meeting with consensus at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Aleryani (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): As I am taking the floor for the first time, I should like to congratulate the Chairman and the other officers of the Committee on their election.

Yemen was one of the first countries to adhere to the treaties and conventions on disarmament, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). The foreign policy of Yemen is based solidly on the need to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in all their forms as a step to consolidating peace, cooperation and development in the Middle East and the world at large.

Yemen supports other countries in the Middle East in expressing concern that Israel is the only country that has not heeded the appeals of the international community to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and is the only country continuing to pose threats to peace and security not only in the Middle East, but also throughout the world. That is why we support the adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.5, presented by Egypt, calling for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.25, entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East".

My country shares the concerns expressed by most countries of the world that countries possessing stockpiles of nuclear weapons should respect their commitments under the protocols they have signed to reduce their stockpiles gradually. My country supports the views expressed by non-nuclear countries about the dangers of such weapons to mankind and the environment, and recognizes the need to guarantee that these weapons will not be used by countries that possess them.

Mr. Tóth (Hungary): This year a draft decision has been put forward on the issue of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The draft is contained in document A/C.1/56/L.11.

As a departure from earlier practice, the draft does not address substantial questions, but sets the stage procedurally for the forthcoming Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the BWC. It is my hope and expectation that the draft decision will receive the traditional consensus support.

In its first paragraph the draft decision requests the Secretary-General to continue to render the necessary assistance to the depositary Governments of the BWC to provide such services as may be required for the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Review Conferences and the 1994 Special Conference, and to render the necessary assistance and to provide such services as may be required for the Fifth Review Conference, which will be held from 19 November to 7 December this year.

Paragraph 2 of the draft decision asks for the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the fifty-seventh session of the item entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction".

Though the draft decision, because of its procedural nature, does not bring to the surface the challenges posed to the international community by recent developments, those challenges are serious. The forthcoming Fifth Review Conference will provide the right setting — that is, the necessary time, discussion framework, structure and expertise — for addressing those challenges in a meaningful way and for trying to identify the path to be followed by the international community in the prevailing situation.

Any review conference, with its five-yearly ritual of stocktaking and action planning, in itself is a crucial event. Finding a common political denominator to interpret the past and project into the future within the time frame of a decade is not an easy task, even under normal circumstances. This time, due to the nature of the issues to be confronted, the Fifth Review Conference will have to penetrate much deeper into the past and the future than any of its predecessors.

Ten years ago, back in 1991, the Third Review Conference launched the process that was first to consider possible verification measures and later draft proposals to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. The negotiations on the compliance protocol undertaken since 1995 in the Ad Hoc Group came to an abrupt halt in August this year. The Fifth Review Conference will have not just to consider the work undertaken during the last decade, but to chart the course for future action that will determine the state of

the whole of the biological weapons prohibition regime for a much longer period than just the next five years. That time-scale altogether is close to a generation. The potential ramifications could extend even further into the future.

The other challenge is posed by the recent incidence of anthrax use. The nature of this challenge is independent of whether these acts are of domestic or international origin. The daily news forces us to live with the notion that the use of such weapons is becoming a de facto part of everyday life. Such a notion is slowly eroding all the prohibition layers, both politically and legally binding, contained in the consensus Final Declarations of all the previous Review Conferences and in the Biological Weapons Convention itself. Moreover, at no time in recent history has there been such a clear and real-time realization that the non-use norm was being violated, it being a legal norm that dates back three quarters of a century to the 1925 Geneva Protocol; the precursor of the legal norm, the 1899 Hague Convention, being more than a century old; and the moral conviction that the use of such weapons would be repugnant to the conscience of mankind being centuries old.

Action or lack of action will shape the future of the biological weapons prohibition regime far beyond the Fifth Review Conference. We will have to reconfirm at the Conference the importance that the international community attaches to the integrity of each and every prohibition norm. We will have to project appropriate measures, including possible verification measures, to strengthen the BWC. We will have to follow up steps agreed upon through action. We will have to turn all these efforts into sustainable action for the period between the Review Conferences. We must not accept the slow erosion of the norms that have served us for decades, if not longer. We must comprehend that in the light of political and public expectations we have no other viable choice but to overcome these challenges.

Ms. Quarless (Jamaica): As Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for the 2001 session, and on behalf of the co-sponsors, who are traditionally members of the expanded Bureau of the Commission, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.4, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission". The draft has been prepared in a manner similar to that of previous resolutions regarding the Disarmament Commission, with appropriate changes to reflect current circumstances. Allow me to point out these changes.

For the second year in a row the paragraphs dealing with the issue of the further rationalization of the Commission's work have not been included in the text, since the subject was not addressed during the 2001 substantive session. During the course of the last session the Commission continued to be seized of the two agenda items, both in their second year of consideration: ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Paragraph 5 of the draft therefore reflects the present agenda of the Commission.

As delegations will remember, in its resolution 55/35 C, the Assembly decided that Disarmament Commission sessions should be for a period not exceeding three weeks, in accordance with the 1998 decision on rationalization of the work of the Commission. The Commission's 2000 session had been reduced to two weeks on an exceptional basis, due to an unusually busy calendar that year. The 2001 substantive session, however, maintained its three full weeks in accordance with the decision, and operative paragraph 6 reaffirms that this practice will be maintained in 2002.

I will now say a few words on the organization of work of the Commission this year. The Chairpersons of the two Working Groups held 12 meetings each, during which delegations conducted meaningful exchange on complex and sensitive issues, made extensive oral presentations and submitted written comments on the Chairperson's first draft. Based on the contributions of member States, the Chairpersons revised their original text. These documents, though non-binding and submitted on the sole responsibility of the Chairpersons of the Working Groups, served as a basis — or framework — for the discussions. It was not an easy task to try to maintain optimum balance among the differing interests on the issues, which address the essential precepts and the range of perspectives on security. I am pleased to report that the Working Groups rose admirably to the challenge.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to both Chairpersons, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei of Ghana and Ms. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, for their valiant work. I also wish to commend the delegations for their constructive approach to the work of the Commission.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and his staff, as well as the staff of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services for their professionalism and unswerving support in ensuring the efficient conduct of the Commission's work.

I believe that I speak on behalf of all delegations when I express guarded optimism as to the future success of the Commission's deliberations during its forthcoming session in 2002. I believe that the 2001 session has contributed to strengthening the foundation which allows for further consensus-building on the issues that will be before the Commission next year. I hope that draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.4 on the report of the Disarmament Commission will again enjoy the consensus support of the Committee, as similar draft resolutions have in previous years.

Mr. De Saram (Sri Lanka): I speak under agenda item 66. The report (A/56/29) of the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean is before us under that agenda item. I have the honour to address the Committee as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, whose purpose it is to determine how the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace might be implemented. It is by no means an easy responsibility.

The Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace was adopted by the General Assembly in 1971. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean last reported to the General Assembly in 1999, two years ago, at the fifty-fourth session. The Committee in its 1999 report recorded that it had not found it possible to reach consensus on the manner of the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. The General Assembly took note of the Committee's report, and expressed the conviction that the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and of the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee was most important. It requested that consultations continue with the members of the Committee, with the permanent members of the Security Council, and with the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, with a view to resolving the difficulties encountered on the question of the implementation of the Declaration. The Assembly requested that the Chairman of the Committee should, through the Committee, report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session in 2001, this year.

There are a number of difficulties in the way of the implementation of the objectives of the Declaration, which consultations with permanent members of the Security Council, major maritime users of the Indian Ocean and other members of the Committee have not as yet been able to resolve. Yet, however difficult implementation of the objectives of the 1971 Declaration may be, I believe, as Chairman of the Committee, that, as the report of the Committee notes, the objectives of the Declaration should continue to be preserved by the General Assembly: as an ideal towards which all concerned with the Indian Ocean, and with the Indian Ocean region, should, through participation in the Ad Hoc Committee, continue to strive, towards those goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean and in the Indian Ocean region that all members of the Committee — indeed all Members of the United Nations — fully share.

Thus I hope that the First Committee will find it possible to propose to the General Assembly this year, as it did two years ago in 1999, that the General Assembly maintain the item "Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace" on its agenda; that the General Assembly request that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, notwithstanding the difficulties obviously in its way, should continue its endeavours to arrive at an appropriate consensus; and that a report should be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

Mr. Sastradivedja (Indonesia): Indonesia, as one of the sponsors, supports draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.44/Rev.1, introduced by the delegation of Myanmar. We have been supporting in its entirety since 1995 the process resulting in the current draft resolution, because of its relevance to the state of disarmament efforts today and its comprehensive nature in addressing nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and related matters, reflecting the conscience of Indonesia and other Non-Aligned Movement countries.

The main thrust of the draft resolution is a programme for a phased reduction of nuclear arsenals leading to their total elimination. The draft resolution identifies a number of measures which, when implemented, will make a significant contribution to lessening the nuclear nightmare and the multiple

danger of deaths arising from them. Its adoption by an overwhelming majority would facilitate the nuclear disarmament to which we are all firmly committed.

Furthermore, we are convinced that the convening at an early date of an international conference that would lead to the adoption of substantive measures of nuclear disarmament has become imperative. The current international situation demands no less.

I should also like to express Indonesia's full support for the statement by the delegation of South Africa on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement in introducing five draft resolutions and one draft decision.

Indonesia is also concerned about the question of nuclear dangers, about which the Secretary-General has warned us, and which is included in the Millennium Declaration. In our view, these dangers can emanate from a vast array of sources, including nuclear weapons and nuclear reactors, spent fuel and other radioactive materials. Apart from dangers posed by technical malfunctioning and deliberate political and military decisions, the unpredictable consequences deriving from nuclear attack and nuclear terrorism cannot remain indefinitely in the realm of speculation. For these reasons, Indonesia fully endorses the Mexican draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.16, entitled "United Nations conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers in the context of nuclear disarmament".

The Acting Chairman: We have heard all the speakers on the list for this meeting. Does any other representative wish to speak at this stage?

Mr. De Saram (Sri Lanka): Yesterday the Chairman said that this afternoon, if time permitted, he would perhaps take action on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.7, entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space". Since consultations about action on the draft resolution are still continuing, may I request that action on it be held off for a few more days? In the interests of having the draft resolution adopted by the Committee, I believe that you, Sir, could grant this request.

The Acting Chairman: There is no problem in granting that request.

The Committee has thus concluded the second phase of its work, namely, thematic discussion on item subjects as well as introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items.

I call on the Committee's Secretary.

Mr. Sattar (Secretary of the Committee): I wish to inform members of the Committee of additional sponsors of draft resolutions as follows. A/C.1/56/L.12: Afghanistan, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Haiti, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia, Nauru and Zambia. A/C.1/56/L.13: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Namibia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Zambia. A/C.1/56/L.14: Afghanistan, Costa Rica, Haiti, Madagascar, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Zambia. A/C.1/56/L.15: Ireland. A/C.1/56/L.24: Jamaica and Papua New Guinea. A/C.1/56/L.30: Malta. A/C.1/56/L.34: Jamaica. A/C.1/56/L.37: Albania, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A/C.1/56/L.40: Papua New Guinea. A/C.1/56/L.41: United States of America. A/C.1/56/L.45: Jamaica, Papua New Guinea and Qatar. A/C.1/56/L.47: Croatia, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea and Mali.

Organization of work

The Acting Chairman: As the Committee has already been informed, in accordance with the Committee's decision, the First Committee will this afternoon begin the third phase of its work: action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under agenda items 64 to 84. In this connection, I draw attention to the text of the Chairman's clustering paper, document A/C.1/56/CRP.3, which was made available for consideration last week.

In order to utilize the remaining time and facilities in an efficient and constructive manner, I would remind delegations that the Committee will proceed to take decisions on draft resolutions contained in informal working paper No. 1, which will be distributed shortly. I count on the full cooperation and assistance of the members of the Committee to enable the Chair to conclude the work of the Committee as scheduled on time.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.